

God Will Reveal His Will, Part 1 - Acts 15:22-26 – May 11th, 2008

- This conference in Jerusalem had concluded with James resolving a dispute between the Jews and Gentiles regarding circumcision.
- The decision was made to send a letter to the Gentile believers in order to address certain matters of concern for the Jewish believers.
- The text we have before us can teach us how it is, and the way it is, that God will reveal His will to us, so as to show us what to do.

- Here in Luke's record, we can gain understanding into how this counsel in Jerusalem was able to discern the will of God.
- A most serious matter has come up and it could split the early church if it's not resolved according to God's will and in God's way.
- Perhaps we have this detailed account so we can learn the ways in which God will show us His will for us like He did for them, then.

1. He uses the church (Verse 22a)

22a Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

v22a The apostles, and elders, with the whole church, make the decision to choose some from their fellowship to send to Antioch.

- This is huge! The future of Christianity would have been threatened had it not been for this counsel agreeing to resolve this matter.
- They were all in agreement, both in the church and as a church, with what God's will was for circumcision for the Gentile believers.

"The letter written to the church at Antioch stated that the believers in Jerusalem were in one accord. That's so important. Whether you're wrestling with an issue of lifestyle or doctrine, find out what the church says about it. Throughout church history, what has been the stance of the church regarding the subject with which you're struggling?" Jon Courson

"Much credit goes to the certain men of Acts 15:1, who allowed themselves to be convinced by the evidence from the Scriptures and by the confirmation of the Holy Spirit. The church agreed! We can almost admire the certain men of Acts 15:1, because they boldly stated their convictions, even though their convictions were wrong. But even more admirable is the way they are willing to be taught and shown they are wrong. A teachable spirit is a precious thing!"

David Guzik, Calvary Chapel Siegen in Germany

Ephesians 4:11-13 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: KJV

"A church can wither as surely under the ministry of soulless Bible exposition as it can where no Bible is given at all. To be effective, the preacher's message must be alive--it must alarm, arouse, challenge; it must be God's present voice to a particular people. Then, and not until then, is it the prophetic word and the man himself, a prophet." A.W. Tozer

2. He uses the leadership (Verse 22b)

22b They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.

v22b They send two men, Barsabbas and Silas, to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas because they were leaders among the brothers.

- This was an important matter; this ruling as it were, needed to get to Antioch to settle this dispute once and for all in the church.
- It's no wonder they chose two men that had leadership qualities to go with none other than Barnabas and the Apostle Paul himself.

"God always works through men performing tasks on the earth." (Barnhouse)

2 Chronicles 1:7-12 7 That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." 8 Solomon answered God, "You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place. 9 Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. 10 Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?" NIV

3. He uses the bold (Verses 23-24)

23 With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. 24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said.

v23 They send a letter with a warm greeting to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia where the dispute began.

v24 The letter acknowledges that they had heard about those without the churches authorization disturbing and troubling them.

- This letter will boldly confront the contrary teaching that required the Gentiles obey the Jewish law of circumcision in order to be saved.

Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. KJV

1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: ASV

“There comes a time when grace has to give way to truth. We cannot hold hands with everybody. The idea that love embraces everything is wrong. Love reaches out to everyone, it is true, but love does not embrace error. There comes a time when those who propagate false and divisive teachings must be confronted, their teachings denounced, and their errors exposed. And when they use the names of their more orthodox brethren to lend credence to their beliefs, the deception must be exposed.”
John Phillips “Exploring Acts” Volume 2 p299

4. He uses the risk takers (Verses 25-26)

25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul- 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

v25 The letter goes on to say that they chose men to send to them with their dear friends Barnabas and the Apostle Paul.

v26 They take it a step further by saying that these men that were chosen, had risked their lives for the name of Jesus Christ.

- One translation says they were men who hazarded their lives, meaning they gave up their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ.
- I'm convinced that God is looking for those who will take a risk and hazard their lives for the Lord and for His word.

- A calm sea does not produce a skilled sailor.

- You cannot discover new oceans unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.